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FILE

Suspect in Iran arms case described as eager to retire

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WASHINGTON — Army Lt. Col. Wayne G. Gillespie, one of six people arrested Thursday on charges of plotting to smuggle weapons to Iran, was known in Washington as a man eager to retire and find a new career.

"He had a resume out on the street; everyone knew that. He was looking to retire," said retired Col. Howard Glock, Gillespie's former boss at the Army Materiel Command headquarters in nearby Alexandria, Va. "I've only seen him once or twice at social functions since I retired. But I knew he was looking for a job."

The line of work that the FBI says Gillespie chose can be lucrative. An FBI affidavit filed in federal courts in California, Virginia and Florida says that Paul Sjeklocha, also known as Paul Cutter, another of those arrested, told an undercover FBI agent that he had earned between \$6 million and \$8 million selling arms to Iran in the last two years.

"We're not sure that's true, but we think it's certainly something worth looking into," an FBI official said Friday.

According to the FBI, Gillespie flew to Orlando, Fla., to inspect and authenticate 1,140 TOW anti-tank missiles offered for sale to Iran in an FBI sting.

While driving to a phony inspection site set up in the sting, Gillespie chatted with an undercover agent, the affidavit states. "He expects to retire before the end of 1985, and expects to go into private business with Paul Sjeklocha," the affidavit says. Gillespie is said to have added, "It has been a good life, now [I] want to try something else and earn some money."

Gillespie's worries about money and his future are a theme that kept coming up in interviews with people who know him. Jim Parker, a retired serviceman who lives steps away from Gillespie's modest townhouse in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, said Gillespie had questioned him recently about Parker's success in finding a job after retiring from the military.

Gillespie, 46, whose wife works as an analyst at the World Bank, earned about \$42,000 a year, according to an Army spokesman. At the end of this year, as a 30-year veteran, he would have been entitled to receive a yearly pension of 75 percent of his current base pay, plus annual cost-of-living increases.

A West Point graduate who served two tours of duty in Vietnam and speaks five languages, Gillespie met — as part of his Army duties — with representatives of Western European nations to form "agreements on how to standardize equipment" within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), said Army spokesman Ray Aponte.

Gillespie had a "Top Secret —

NATO" security clearance, which Aponte called "pretty high, but not the highest."

Gillespie's work did not involve any selling of arms to foreign governments, Aponte said. His title was that of research and development coordinator in the office of the deputy chief of staff for international programs at the Army Materiel Command.

Fred Murrill, a retired officer who worked with Gillespie, added that Gillespie's specialties were air defense and antiaircraft weapons. The shopping list that the FBI says Sjeklocha provided to its undercover agent included a demand for several types of highly sophisticated antiaircraft missiles.

The Gillespie case has been a frequent topic of conversation among military officers in the Washington area, both active and retired.

"It's just like the Navy guys did after the Walker spy case broke," said Glock, "even though this is nowhere near as serious."

He was referring to the anxiety that swept the Navy after charges earlier this summer that former Navy officer John A. Walker Jr.; his son Michael, an enlisted man aboard the aircraft carrier Nimitz; his brother Arthur, a former lieutenant commander, and Jerry A. Whitworth, a former Navy man from California, all had spied for the Soviet Union.